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A CASE OF MEANINGFUL MAGIC

ALEXANDER C. SOPER

IN HONOR OF THE NINTH PRESENTATION OF THE
CHARLES LANG FREER MEDAL

FREER GALLERY OF ART
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

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THE CHARLES LANG FREER MEDAL

Milo C. Beach, Director of the Freer Gallery of Art, presented the Charles Lang Freer Medal to Alexander C. Soper III on January 11, 1989. At Professor Soper's request the presentation was made at his home in Rosemont, Pennsylvania. Priscilla Soucek, Porter McCray, and Thomas Lawton took part in the ceremony. In keeping with a tradition established when the Medal was first awarded in 1956, Professor Soper has written an essay for publication, which the Freer Gallery is honored to present along with a bibliography of his writings since 1972.

Milo C. Beach presents Freer Medal to Alexander C. Soper

INTRODUCTION

MILO CLEVELAND BEACH
Director, Freer Gallery of Art

The Charles Lang Freer Medal was established in 1956 in memory of the founder of the Freer Gallery of Art. At the request of Archibald G. Wenley (1898–1962), who served as director of the Freer Gallery from 1942 to 1962, the noted American sculptor Paul Manship (1885–1966) designed the medal.[1] Manship included a portrait of Freer, based on a photograph by Edward Steichen (1879–1973), on the obverse of the medal, together with a view of the north facade of the gallery. The reverse of the medal bears the citation: "For distinguished contribution to the knowledge and understanding of Oriental civilizations as reflected in their arts."

In honoring outstanding scholars in the field of Asian art, the gallery has already conferred the Freer Medal on eight distinguished people. The first recipient in 1956 was Professor Osvald Sirén (1879–1966) of Stockholm, a pioneer who devoted a long and fruitful career to the study of Chinese art. Four years later, the Freer paid tribute to scholarship concerned with the Near East and especially the arts of Islam. In this field, the obvious choice for the second award was Professor Ernst Kühnel (1882–1964) of Berlin, the dean of his field and an innovator in the interpretation of the arts of Islam to the Western world. In 1965 the third Freer Medal was presented to Professor Yashiro Yukio (1890–1975), the doyen of Japanese art historians.

To mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Freer Gallery in 1973, the Freer Medal was presented to three scholars for their achievements in the major areas included in the museum's collections. Professor Tanaka Ichimatsu (1895–1983), the celebrated Japanese scholar, was

honored on May 2, 1973. Laurence Sickman (1907–1988), director emeritus of the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, Missouri, received the medal on September 11, 1973, for his outstanding accomplishments in the study of Chinese art. And on January 16, 1974, Professor Roman Ghirshman (1895–1979), the noted Near Eastern scholar, was awarded the medal for his lifetime of distinguished study of that area of the world.

The seventh recipient of the Freer Medal was Professor Max Loehr (1903–1988), whose many scholarly achievements in the study of Chinese art were celebrated during the presentation ceremony on May 2, 1983. In 1985, Dr. Stella Kramrisch was honored as a Freer Medal recipient in recognition of her unique contributions in the study of Indian art.

On January 11, 1989, I had the honor of presenting the ninth Charles Lang Freer Medal to Professor Alexander C. Soper III at his home in Rosemont, Pennsylvania. Professor Soper's many books, articles, translations, and reviews on a broad range of Asian art topics have been praised for their profound content, elegant style, and quiet humor.[2] Among Professor Soper's books, *The Evolution of Buddhist Architecture in Japan*, published by Princeton University Press in 1942, holds a special place in Western literature on that subject. His collaboration with Robert Treat Paine on *The Art and Architecture of Japan*, which appeared in 1955 as one of the initial volumes in the Pelican History of Art series, was followed in 1956 by an equally successful collaboration with Laurence Sickman, resulting in *The Art and Architecture of China*. With characteristic modesty Professor Soper is fond of describing his portions of both texts, which present stylistic and chronological analyses of Japanese and Chinese architecture, as "the portions no one reads." In fact, his precise, detailed descriptions of the evolution of Japanese and Chinese architecture remain standard reference works for students and scholars.

Nowhere is Professor Soper's formidable erudition more evident than in his two volumes treating early Chinese Buddhist art: *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China*, which appeared in 1959, and

Textual Evidence for the Secular Arts of China in the Period from Liu Sung through Sui (A.D. 420–618), published in 1967. His searching interpretations of Buddhist texts and related iconographical problems, joined with his encyclopedic command of Buddhist and secular concepts, bespeak extraordinary learning.

In 1960 Professor Soper succeeded Alfred Salmony (1890–1958) as editor of the respected journal *Artibus Asiae*. During the past thirty years he has been responsible for maintaining that publication in its position as one of the leading scholarly journals in its field. Professor Soper's many contributions to *Artibus Asiae*—particularly his urbane, witty book reviews—have informed and delighted a generation of readers.

Alexander Soper was born in Chicago on February 18, 1904. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Hamilton College in 1925. Four years later, he was awarded a Master of Fine Arts degree from Princeton University's School of Architecture. Following a brief period when he taught in the School of Architecture at Princeton and worked as an architect, Professor Soper decided to pursue a career in Asian art history. His initial interest in Asian art developed from challenging lectures given by George Rowley (1893–1962), professor of Chinese art and curator of Far Eastern art in the Princeton Art Museum for thirty-five years. Professor Soper began his graduate studies in Asian art by studying Chinese language and history at Columbia University. A grant from the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation enabled him to travel to Japan, where he studied Japanese art and architecture in Kyoto from 1935 to 1938. He earned his doctorate from the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton in 1944 with a dissertation on Japanese architecture.

During World War II, Professor Soper served in the Marine Corps Reserve as a Japanese language officer. At the end of the war he went to Japan as part of a naval intelligence team to survey Japanese naval equipment and installations.

When Professor Soper returned to the United States in 1946, he resumed his academic career at Bryn Mawr College. Two years later

he was appointed to the rank of full professor. Clear recognition of Professor Soper's international status as an Asian art authority came in 1960, with his appointment to the prestigious professorship of Oriental art at the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University. He currently holds the positions of professor emeritus and adjunct professor at the institute.

Acknowledgment of Professor Soper's many scholarly contributions already includes a citation from the American Council of Learned Societies in 1961 and, in the following year, an Honorary Degree of Humane Letters from Hamilton College. For myself and for my colleagues at the Freer Gallery, I am pleased to be able to present the Freer Medal to Professor Soper for his "distinguished contribution to the knowledge and understanding of Oriental civilizations as reflected in their arts."

Notes

1. As a young man Manship visited Charles Freer's home in Detroit, where he studied the large and important Chinese collection. In a letter to Freer dated May 26, 1914, Manship wrote, "I don't know how to write to you to express what your kindness and the inspiration of your collection has meant to me. In a person's life come moments which influence the whole existence. I believe that you and your work have had an effect of greatest importance on my future! What more can I say!"

2. A convenient reference to Professor Soper's publications is provided by *Writings of Alexander Soper: A Bibliography to 1972*, edited by Penelope Mason Scull, published by the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in 1973.

Alexander C. Soper

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Figures 1 and 2 show in very different situations the three motifs which are the central concern of this paper. By a happy coincidence the two bronze vessels are now close neighbors, the small elephant *zun* in the Freer Gallery of Art (fig. 1) and the *gui* a special prize of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (fig. 2). The elephant is literally almost unique.[1] The *gui*, decorated as we see here, is followed almost identically by a few known vessels, and closely related to a good many more.[2] The period for both bronzes is probably late Late Shang.

On the Sackler *gui* two of the motifs appear together in alternation in the lower of two narrow bands that frame the swelling body. Both are "eyed" and in low relief. In the upper band the third role is played instead by a diminutive horned "dragon." In Bernhard Karlgren's now nearly forgotten terminology published a half century ago, the round unit common to both bands was called a "whorl circle" and given the code designation C13. The second motif was called a "square-with-crescents," B7.[3] The substitute that replaces it in the upper band, a short, horned creature that turns back on itself compactly within an imaginary square, Karlgren placed in the "turning dragon" category, C6.

These similar alternating patterns, unlike almost all other early bronze themes, neither form part of a highly symmetrical design centering on a *taotie* nor do they move continuously around the vessel in one direction as profile zoomorphs sometimes do. On *gui* they typically occupy a quadrant, each pair of zones being separated from the other by a handle on the vessel's main axis. The minor axis may be

Figure 1. Bronze elephant *zun*, late Late Shang dynasty. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 36.6.

marked by a disk no different from the others, or as here by a low-relief animal mask; never, to my knowledge, by the square-with-crescents (though that aggressively centralized form would seem to qualify as readily as the other). The body of the Sackler *gui* is filled by "vertical ribbing," B11.

The use that Karlgren made of this code, published in 1937, was to make readily understandable a classification of "Yin and Chou" bronze "decor themes." His three categories—A, B, and C—comprised a total of thirty-three motifs. Group A consisted primarily of *taotie* varieties rendered in several ways involving a central head, or a head with a body split into right and left symmetrical profiles. Group C was made up of sixteen different themes, some profiles of natural or imaginary creatures—birds, snakes, several types of

Figure 2. Bronze *gui*, late Late Shang dynasty. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., S87.0051.

dragon—plus four abstract motifs. Group B, totaling eleven very heterogeneous subdivisions, consisted chiefly of quasi-geometrical abstractions, plus formalized renderings of the *taotie*. The motifs making up the small A group would "regularly go with" each other or with members of the C group, but not with B. B themes would associate with each other or with C motifs "just as fully and frequently" but not with A.[4]

In view of the character of the material Karlgren so exhaustively studied—almost entirely bronzes in private hands, seen in old woodblock prints or photographs of varying quality, acquired through dealers and seldom *necessarily* authentic—this was both a feat of tireless desktop research and a potential source of error on a fairly grand scale. Today, as a result of some four decades of state-controlled exca-

vation in China, a very large number of ancient bronzes has been discovered, from widely distributed find spots, differing greatly in date. Knowledge has to a gratifying extent replaced surmise.

The workability of Karlgren's Group B in particular has turned out to be considerably more complex than he supposed, partly through his inability to set up a valid time scale. As he described them in the early thirties, the groups seemed to have operated almost independently of the passage of time, without clear reference even to the change of dynasty from Shang/Yin to Zhou. In fact the B group is riddled with history. It has been recognized for a half-century that one distinctive member, the "de-tailed bird," B3, is not found in the usual combinations because it was used at the very end of the classical Yin-Zhou period, at a time of wholesale change when most of the other bronze themes had been given up. More recently archaeological finds have determined that *taotie* types which seemed to Karlgren unmistakable latecomers, in which the onetime clarity of drawing had begun to "dissolve," to be "deformed," in part even to be "obliterated," was in many instances inescapably a beginning phase of bronzeworking, not an end.[5]

I recall all of this because Karlgren's "square-with-crescents" is a motif used for so long a period that its form and habits underwent a major change. The code B7 identified and characterized by him in fact refers to two noticeably different phases, separated by a century or more. I shall replace it from here on by B7s and B7sz, standing for Shang and Shang-Zhou respectively. When Karlgren's code is applied to the Sackler *gui*, the "whorl circle" C13 alternates with the "turning dragon" C6 in the upper band (fig. 2). The formula is vague, since Karlgren identified by his "turning dragon" several different creatures, only one of which has the turned head and compact proportions seen on our *gui*.[6] I propose for greater accuracy to speak of a "whirling dragon," C6w. Our *gui* has a foot band in which B7sz alternates with C13, while in the neck band C13 alternates with C6w; in between swells the vertically ribbed belly, B11. At this late Late Shang–early Western Zhou stage (the eleventh century B.C.), the

Figure 3. Bronze "Kang Hou" *gui*, early Western Zhou dynasty. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

square-with-crescents looks like an ornamentalized starfish, or a four-petaled blossom whose sharp points discourage its being eaten, or some mythical discus-weapon hurled by one demigod at another. In Karlgren's lists, the band-belly combination is illustrated by his plate XL, a *gui* once in the collection of Mrs. Christian Holmes. In the photographs plate XL seems identical to the Sackler vessel; instead, it belongs to the Eric Lidow Collection now given to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.[7]

The most frequently seen minor variation on this formula omits the ribbing; bare bellies are numerous in the period. A much more radical change brings the B7sz/C13 alternation in *both* bands—neck and foot—with the ribbing still between. That extreme is represented by the formidable bowl now in the British Museum called the Kang Hou *gui* after the Zhou prince named in its inscription (fig. 3).[8] There the seeming hostility of the bands is carried still further by the extraordinary handles, which take the shape of animals with raised shieldlike horns and curving fangs. The vessel looks as if it might have been specially redesigned for an age of dynastic war. Its inscription of twenty-four characters begins with a reference to the seizure of the Shang capital by "the king," meaning either the overthrow of the

dynasty by Wu Wang, Kang's elder brother, or the recovery of the city after a failed coup d'état at the outset of the reign of Wu's boy-successor, Cheng.

There are a good many early Western Zhou bronzes of various types with similar belligerent handles. One other conveniently datable, less intense version of the Kang Hou formula is a *gui* found at the Zhou site of Lingtai in southeastern Gansu.[9] That bronze has no inscription, but was taken from a tomb where the evidence of other vessels has identified the owner as a feudal lord who apparently served the third Zhou king, Kang Wang, roundly a half century after the conquest, in peacetime.

By good fortune the Sackler *gui* has a still longer inscription, which has been studied by a galaxy of Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholars. As shown by Robert Bagley, the now dominant interpretation is that its dating in the twentieth year of an unnamed monarch must refer to one of the last two Shang reigns.[10]

Numerous bronzes partially repeat the features of the Sackler and Lidow *gui*. A third *gui* type, in the Arnold Knapp Collection, differs in marking the secondary axis on its lower band by no more than a double vertical line, against which two square-and-crescent motifs crowd (fig. 4), looking from a distance something like a bristling mask with two eyes. A cruder *gui* once in the Tonying Collection also has the B7sz/C13 alternation on its neck band, but spread around the foot is the B group equivalent of an extended *taotie*, the "animal triple band" (fig. 5).

If the alternation makes use of the whirling dragon instead of the square-with-crescents, a greater variety of combinations is possible. Karlgren chose to illustrate as his no. 295 a *gui* with a C6w/C13 neck band, an extended A group *taotie* on the belly, and a foot band with angular snakes, C12 (fig. 6).[11] His no. 381 is similar except that the belly displays an aggressive B group theme, "compound lozenges" filled with "spikes," B8/B9. These seemed to him the legitimate associations of a C pair with either A or B.

When neither B7sz nor C6w is present, primarily in the single neck

Figure 4. Bronze *gui*, early Western Zhou dynasty. Formerly in the Arnold Knapp Collection, New York.

Figure 5. Bronze *gui*, early Western Zhou dynasty. Formerly in the Tonying Collection, New York.

Figure 6. Bronze *gui*, early Western Zhou dynasty. Formerly in the Oeder Collection, Berlin.

band of *ding* and *liding*, the whorl circle may be occasionally seen alternating with other compact units: with a cicada in continuous horizontal motion (fig. 7);[12] with a small tiger mask or tiger-like *taotie* (fig. 8);[13] with an angular snakelet (fig. 9);[14] with a small profile bird (fig. 10);[15] or with various types of non-whirling dragon (fig. 11).[16] In contrast to this permissiveness, C6w is never found in alternation except with C13; neither is B7sz or B7s.

Considering both appearance and possible meaning, a band made up solely of B7sz motifs may have seemed aesthetically uncomfortable, or as I shall suggest below, risky. At any rate most of the very few which may be found look like the results of back-country unsophistication, or of much later ignorant imitation.

What we have seen so far is a cluster of usages, variously strict or permissive, falling roughly in the last century or the latest decades of Shang and the first of Zhou, and almost entirely concentrated on the

Figure 7. Bronze *liding* with whorl circles and cicadas, Late Shang dynasty. Formerly in the David-Weill Collection, Paris.

Figure 8. Bronze *ding* with whorl circles and tiger masks, Late Shang dynasty. The Arthur M. Sackler Collections, New York.

Figure 9. Bronze *ding* with whorl circles and angular snakes, Late Shang dynasty. Present whereabouts unknown.

gui and *ding* vessels. Prior Shang usage of this sort, in the most creative and ambitious period of bronzeworking at Anyang—the second of the four currently accepted phases, centering on the reign of the warrior-king Wu Ding—seems almost completely lacking. The fabulously rich collection of bronze vessels found in the tomb of Wu Ding's consort Fu Hao is dominated almost exclusively by variations on the A style. Her burial paraphernalia included twin examples of the type of oversized, complex container that typifies Middle and Late Anyang art at its most spectacular, in this case the *lei* form. The pair,

Figure 10. Bronze round *lei* with whorl circles and small birds, Late Shang dynasty. Minneapolis Institute of Arts, bequest of Alfred F. Pillsbury Collection, 50.46.3ab.

Figure 11. Bronze *ding* with whorl circles and trunked dragons, Late Shang dynasty. Kunstindustrie Museum, Copenhagen.

nos. 856 and 866, seem in published photographs to differ only in size, and to fall stylistically between Loehr IV and V.[17] Four out of their A and C components are *taotie*, big fiercely beaked bird-dragons, and emphatic "hanging blades." One narrow band at the shoulder is incongruously filled with a familiar-looking alternation (fig. 12). The clean, geometrical form of the whorl circle is stressed by relief. The other motif occupies too wide a space to be a square-with-crescents; good photographs show it to be a squared-off, intaglio rendering of the whirling dragon. An almost identical big *lei* has been unearthed near Chenggu in far southern Shaanxi, in a pit otherwise full of warrior's gear, perhaps looted from Shang domains to the east by tribesmen.[18] Both this and the Fu Hao vessels are examples of Loehr V, their main features being emphasized by relief; interestingly enough a third monumental *lei* with the same design features, owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is rigorously flat except for its disks, nubbin eyes, and serrated flanges. (Neither of the two excavated pieces has flanges, in spite of their otherwise consistent relief.)[19]

Among the four unmistakable occurrences of B7 in the published Anyang finds, the earliest example that I have seen is an unassuming *ding* from tomb M18 in the Xiaotun area, not far from Fu Hao's tomb and currently believed to date from the same period, the final years of Wu Ding's reign or shortly after (fig. 13).[20] In this Middle Anyang piece the spaces in the neck band between the whorls are filled with a motif that can hardly be anything else but B7 and yet is rendered in a notably different way. The central "square" has no eye and is a wide oblong. The "crescents" look like sunken corner indentations. The whole crowded motif is bounded by the contours of the circular disks on left and right, and by the outlines of the band above and below, instead of being the crisp, freestanding shape we have been looking at so far.

As Robert Bagley makes clear in his discussion of our Sackler *gui*, one believable prototype for this virtual stranger is known (at least in publications I have seen). This is a small, roughly executed potsherd from the Early Shang site of Erligang in Zhengzhou (fig. 14).[21] There

Figure 12. Bronze square *lei* with C6/C13 band, excavated from the Fu Hao tomb, Anyang, middle Late Shang dynasty. After *Yinxu qingtongqi*, Beijing, 1985, pl. 31.

Figure 13. Bronze *ding* with B7s/C13 band, excavated from tomb 18, Xiaotun, Anyang, middle Late Shang dynasty. After Zheng Zhenxiang, *Kaogu xuebao*, 1981, no. 4, pl. XI:3.

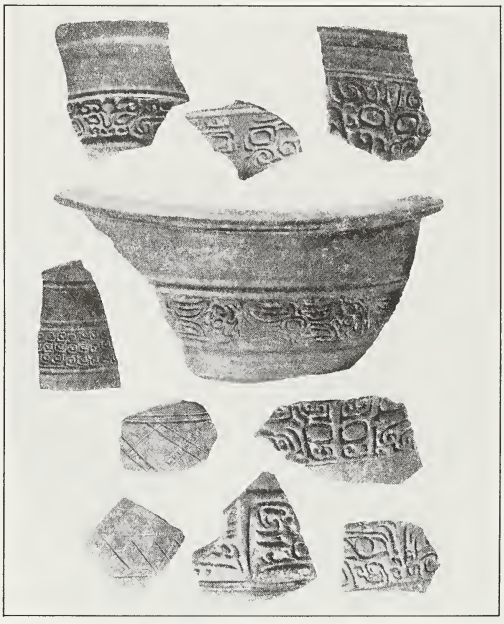

Figure 14. Clay potsherds with *taotie* and B7/C13 bands, excavated from the Erligang site, Zhengzhou, Early Shang dynasty. After *Zhengzhou Erligang*, Beijing, 1959, pl. XIII:1–13.

Figure 15. Bronze *jia* with *taotie* and whorl circle bands, Middle Shang, excavated from tomb at Panlongcheng, Hubei province. After *Zhongguo gu qingtongqi xuan*, Beijing, 1976, cat. no. 4.

the central area is a rough oval, and the four crescents extend sideways rather than on the diagonal.

The chronological usefulness of the Erligang shard is balanced by the appearance on a number of very early bronze *jia* tripods of C13 disks, widely spaced around the vessel's skirt without any alternating motif, or top-and-bottom framing lines. A similarly unframed band around the neck will be occupied by a Loehr II *taotie* or monoculus (fig. 15); this phase is well represented in the Middle Shang site of Panlongcheng.[22]

Figure 16. Bronze *jia* with *taotie* and B7s/C13 bands, middle Late Shang dynasty, excavated from a tomb near Hu Xian, Shaanxi province. After *Shaanxi chutu Shang Zhou qingtongqi*, Vol. 1, Beijing, 1979, pl. 5.

Figure 17. Bronze round *lei* with B7s/C13 band above C motifs, Late Shang dynasty. Private American collection.

Bagley's catalogue illustrates a *jia* from a tomb in Hu Xian, Shaanxi (fig. 16) which exemplifies the skirt-and-neck formula at the Middle Anyang stage of the Xiaotun M18 *ding*.[23] The skirt treatment is now an alternation of B7s with C13, and the upper band offers a procession of delicate monocular curlicues, acceptable within the range of Loehr III.

An unusual round *lei* in a private American collection (fig. 17) has a sloping shoulder filled with a large-scale version of the M18 B7s/C13

Figure 18. Bronze *pou* with four tiers of decoration, including narrow B7s/C13 band, middle Late Shang dynasty. The Art Museum, Princeton University, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morse.

pairing. Square *lei* development after the Fu Hao phase turned toward increasing heaviness and an almost obsessive emphasis on powerful *taotie*, repeated in one tier after another, leaving no role for secondary features. Unexpectedly a narrow, below-shoulder band using the archaic B7s/C13 theme turns up frequently on the bulging, crowded round *pou* of the period (fig. 18), competing for attention with big *taotie* or crisscrossing on the belly and sculptural projections rising from the shoulder shelf.[24] The disk component is typically rendered in relief, while B7s remains sunken and crowded. By some historical accident this early stage of the alternating pair was transferred to the South, outside the Shang kingdom, where it became the standard way of decorating the borders of the large bronze bells of "the Yangzi region," carried well into the Zhou period.[25]

One rare display of the mature square-and-crescents motif is its use, alone and at large scale, on suitably proportioned vessel types, nota-

Figure 19. Bronze severe style *zun* with four B7sz motifs from Tomb M93, Anyang, Henan province, late Late Shang dynasty. After *Henan chutu Shang Zhou qingtongqi*, Vo. 1, Beijing, 1980, pl. 202.

bly the relatively slender *zun* found from late Anyang on into Western Zhou. In its simplest form this choice may set four engraved B7sz units in a wide, flat band around the middle of an otherwise bare *zun*, achieving the "less-is-more" virtues of what Ludwig Bachhofer called "the severe style."[26] For dating purposes it is fortunate that two identical *zun* of this sort were found together in a relatively large, late Late Shang tomb, M93, in Anyang's populous West Cemetery (fig. 19).[27]

Figure 20. Bronze *zun* featuring four B7sz motifs, late Late Shang or early Western Zhou dynasty. Senoku hakko Kan, Kyoto.

This is the largest tomb in the area, almost twice as spacious as the general average. Its walls have the standard Shang shelf around all four sides, and the floor has the familiar, centrally located pit, now holding a sacrificial human male instead of a dog. The approach is by a dogleg staircase, the only one in the cemetery.

The fact that the only two bronze vessels unearthed in M93 were the twin *zun* is probably explainable by grave robbery. The robbers left behind a good many smaller objects, including bronze arms, ladles, and hand bells, some of which were found scattered in their access shaft. The *zun* may have been overlooked because their plainness made them less attractive than others that were taken out. What these last may have been is of course impossible to say. Some comparative value may attach to the number and character of bronze vessels

still found in another, much smaller well-equipped tomb in the cemetery that escaped robbery, tomb M907.[28] There were eight vessels of standard types using familiar A, B, or C decorative motifs: two *gu* of different shapes, plus single *jue*, *ding*, *gui* with handles, *jia*, *you* bucket, and *zhi*. None of these has B7/C13 type embellishment, and none was in the "severe style."

The two *zun* in tomb M93 have almost identical inscriptions, both written within a *ya*-shaped honorific frame.

The four square-and-crescent motifs, set on axis around their vessel's middle, are used with radically different effect on a *zun* in the Sumitomo Collection, Senoku hakko Kan (fig. 20).[29] All the five tiers are filled with ornaments, held in by scored flanges. The B7sz filling each belly quadrant is rendered with extra cusps that give the whole almost the look of an explosion.

On the still thinner *gu* goblet, in both the round and square versions current at the end of Shang, the lack of space for decoration must have discouraged any attempts to dramatize the square-and-crescents motif by such severe isolation. Bagley illustrates one square *gu* designed to stress an "uninterrupted verticality," on which a single small B7sz occupies a zone just below the middle on each of the four sides (separated from its neighbors on either side by flanges); the resulting design is shockingly incongruous.[30] *Gu*-like goblets that are *stouter* than usual come so close in shape and proportion to slender *zun* that either name seems justified. A second Bagley illustration shows a square piece in the National Palace Museum, called a *zun*, which displays two diminutive B7sz per face on bands just above and below the middle zone.[31] A single such zone, just above the middle field, is the special feature of the Sackler round *zun* no. 47 (fig. 21).[32]

A product of similar thinking and execution is the small Freer elephant (fig. 1), where the square-and-crescent motif is simply set down in the midst of whole or disintegrated *taotie* elements, to which it bears no relation. A closely similar piece without the intrusive symbol but with a fantastically elaborated trunk-end, has been unearthed in Hunan.[33]

Figure 21. Bronze *gu*-shaped *zun* featuring two B7sz motifs per quadrant, late Late Shang dynasty. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., S87.0035.

Figure 22. Bronze four-handled *gui* on square stand, featuring whorl circles and spiralized elephants, early Western Zhou dynasty. Collection of the Newark Museum, 52.174.

The whorl circle C13 occasionally underwent a similar exaggeration in the same general late period; the disks set on the shoulder of an up-to-date *lei* may be larger and more dominant than before. A novel type of vessel, a *gui* with four handles instead of two, produces quadrant areas that may contain only enlarged C13. This new possibility is pushed to an extreme in a four-handled *gui* on a square stand in the Newark Museum (fig. 22), where each quadrant is occupied by a

Figure 23. Bronze four-handled *gui* featuring whorl circles and disintegrating *taotie* motifs, early Western Zhou. Formerly C. T. Loo Collection, Paris.

single big whorl circle, C13, flanked by two "vertical dragons," A5, of the sort that traditionally might accompany a big *taotie*, like standing courtiers on either side of an enthroned king.[34] The same design is used for the large domical lid, divided by exaggeratedly salient flanges. The long, ornamented lugs at the bases of the handles and the attached stand with spiralized elephants are early Western Zhou novelties, brought together here without much concern for harmony, perhaps to ascribe special honor to the vessel's owner; unfortunately, the provenance is unknown. A similar but less extreme layout is seen on a four-handled *gui* with two disks per quadrant and no stand, unearthed in Jiangsu.[35]

To the best of my knowledge neither B7sz nor C13 was ever placed on other early Western Zhou vessels that display the more prevalent new symbols of power—the spiralized elephant pair or the affronted pair of big birds with streaming head and tail feathers—used in place of a *taotie*. A compromise appears on a four-handled *gui* formerly in

the C. T. Loo Collection (fig. 23). The scheme sets two whorl circles with their accompanying vertical dragons in each belly quadrant. The foot band contains what looks at first like a *taotie;* but the two halves of the mask are distinctly separate, with a generalized vertical shape between, so that they count merely as profile dragons, in the C group rather than in A. As if to even the new-old balance a little further, the foot is made taller than usual, and in that sense regains some importance.

Four astonishing latecomers to the task of celebrating the new quasi-royal status of the whorl circle were excavated in Mei Xian, Shaanxi, on the Wei River between Xi'an and Baoju (fig. 24).[36] Two are square *yi* and one is a smaller *zun;* the fourth is a fairly natural-looking horse. The *yi* have steep, roof-like lids, while the *zun* beaker rises from a cubical body to a flaring, trumpet-like mouth. All three have tall vertical handles that look like spouts, and corner flanges set on diagonals. All three are lavishly embellished in an overblown proto-Middle Zhou style. Each of the sidewall and roof panels encloses a C13 disk framed by big turning dragons that still recall the late Shang C6w formula. The disk itself is now surrounded by sixteen short, pointed cusps that suggest—deliberately?—the spiky armature of B7sz. The author of the report, Guo Moruo, commenting on the very long inscriptions, ascribes the group to the reign of the fifth Zhou king, Yi Wang (orthodox dates 934–908 B.C.).

I believe that it is possible to bring together these various characteristics to determine with some confidence the purposes for which B17, C13, and C6w were placed on some vessels—a small minority—of the early Bronze Age.

To begin with, at one period late in Shang and very early in Western Zhou, one group of patrons and/or shamans apparently came to believe that two of our motifs ranked high enough in the hierarchy of supernatural powers to warrant their being represented on certain vessels at an oversized scale, singly or almost singly. The whorl circle had been granted a special importance since early in the Bronze Age by being shown emphatically on the skirts of archaic *jia*, and later on

Figure 24. Bronze square *yi* excavated at Mei Xian, Shaanxi province, middle Western Zhou dynasty. After *Shaanxi chutu Shang Zhou qingtongqi*, Vol. 3, Beijing, 1980, pl. 196.

still larger on the shoulders of *pou* and *lei*, in line and widely separated. The square-with-crescents had been given a much more restricted authority, apparently confined to two closely related wine vessel types, the *zun* and the *gu*. On the first of these (with some twenty now known examples) it was shown large in the bulb area, one *zun* facing in each direction (four in all), against an otherwise

absolutely plain, "severe" body. The six *gu* I have counted are mostly square and show one or two small B7sz units per quadrant, above or below the bulb, being otherwise fully decorated with the conventional *gu* themes.

By far the largest number of B7 and C6w occurrences are found alternating in narrow bands, both on vessels where they form the only "decoration" and on others where they coexist with shapes that may seem to dominate the whole. As we have seen, this later condition is common from middle Late Shang on down, on large, richly embellished *lei*, where the circles are made dominant by relief and the squares are crowded into the background. In late Late Shang and early Western Zhou the two are used at equal size. The alternation is relatively frequent on tripod *ding*, set in a neck belt above a bare body. On *gui* with handles it may mark both neck and foot zones, while the belly between is filled by close-set ribbing, or the crisscross motif, or is left bare.

By now several lists of Shang and Western Zhou bronzes have been published that indicate by photographs or descriptions their iconographic elements, and so suggest a frequency study. The most recent and comprehensive list that I know is provided by Hayashi Minao's truly enormous examination of the forms and decorations of Shang and Western Zhou bronzes.[37] His volume of plates provides many hundreds of small photographs of extant pieces, most of them clear, covering both objects now in Japanese or Western museums and private collections and those excavated under official control since 1949. Unfortunately the low relief or sunken lines used for B7, C6w, and C13 require better than average photographs for proper identification, and a small proportion of Hayashi's examples are for that reason unusable for my present purpose.

A rough, preliminary enumeration gives twenty examples in Hayashi's list of the alternation of B7 and C13, and forty-one of the alternative, C6w and C13. By a separate count I have found reports in the standard Chinese archaeological journals that give fourteen and twenty-three such uses, respectively. In other words, of the two com-

binations in which C13 appears as a common factor, the alternative using the whirling dragon was chosen up to twice as often as the square-with-crescents, for the same sort of use. If the more emphatic option, the choice of B7/C13 for *both* neck and foot belts in *gui* design, was followed, as on the Kang Hou vessel (fig. 3), the number of extant, published examples I know of shrinks to seven.

The Hayashi list confirms that neither B7 nor C6w will be found alternating with any motif other than C13; nor will either be normally found in such narrow bands alone, without alternation. C13, on the other hand, does occasionally alternate with a few other themes: the cicada, the tiger-like mask, the bird, the angular snake, or a non-whirling minor dragon.

I have suggested that for some limited period in late Late Shang and early Western Zhou the two basic motifs—not C6w—were employed to symbolize powers that might be granted top ranking. The two were used most often in alternation, not for decorative variety, but to counteract each other, to achieve an equipoise by their opposite symbolic forms and attributes. Of the two, B7 required the more careful handling, being very seldom shown alone and being given a substitute, C6w, to reduce still further the frequency of its appearance; a substitute at a lower level of forcefulness and possibly of danger.

It is natural to ask what these two manifestly crucial shapes were intended to represent. (The Chinese habitually refer to B7 as floral; Bagley uses the word "floweret"; Karlgren decided that it was a dragon form, broken down by time.) To me they signify light and darkness, the still, shimmering heat of the sun and the wild, thundering downpour of the storm. The whorl circle closely resembles the element for sun that accompanies a crescent moon in the early character for brightness, our *ming*. C6w, first shown compressed like a spring and later swirling free, must be based on the vertical S-shape of one form of the character for dragon, our *long*, or the squared-off spiral standing for a cyclone. B7 suggests a filled-out version of the pictograph for lightning, a slanting line forked at each end, doubled to gain a greater authority given by symmetry.

What the bronze formula required the human mind to add was the factor of time. It was the regular, unvarying succession of the two natural powers, sun and rain, that gave the world in which man lived its most secure, most blessed state. That succession was to some extent assured by the presence of their unique symbols on the sacred vessels serving early Chinese religion.

Notes

1. John A. Pope et al., *The Freer Chinese Bronzes*, Vol. 1, Washington, D.C., 1967, p. 228, no. 40 (36.6); Pope identified the elephant vessel as "*Huo*, Shang dynasty (late Anyang)." Published in the 1946 Freer bronze catalogue, p. 41 and pl. 24, as Zhou dynasty.

2. Robert W. Bagley, *Shang Ritual Bronzes in the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*, Washington and Cambridge, 1987, pp. 521 ff., no. 103, especially 532–33.

3. Bernhard Karlgren, "New Studies on Chinese Bronzes," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, no. 9, Stockholm, 1937, pp. 13 ff.

4. Ibid., pp. 70-79. For Karlgren's later reflections on his theory see "Marginalia on Some Bronze Albums," *Bulletin*, no. 31, 1959, pp. 289–90, "Marginalia II," Bulletin, no. 32, 1960, pp. 1–24; also "Some Characteristics of the Yin Art," *Bulletin*, no. 34, 1962, pp. 2–18.

5. Soper, "Early, Middle, and Late Shang," *Artibus Asiae*, XXVIII, 1966, no. 1, pp. 5–38.

6. Karlgren, "New Studies," pp. 18–21, 34, nos. 393–400.

7. Another almost identical *gui* is illustrated by Bagley, *Sackler Collections*, p. 532, fig. 103.17, as "formerly in the Mount Trust collection." For the Holmes-Lidow piece see George Kuwayama, *Ancient Ritual Bronzes of China*, Los Angeles, 1976, p. 48.

8. Listed by Karlgren, "New Studies," as his no. 394 erroneously; his code notation B7:B11:C13 should group it with vessel no. 401. Studied in great detail by Chen Mengjia in his listing of dated Western Zhou bronzes in *Kaogu*

xuebao, 1955, no. 1, pp. 161–68 (in Chinese); and under the name Malcolm *gui* (after a previous owner) in "Malcolm's K'ang Hou Kuei and Its Set," *Oriental Art*, Vol. 1, no. 3, 1948, pp. 111–16.

9. Reported in Chu Shibing, *Kaogu xuebao*, 1977, no. 2, pp. 99–130 and pl. 4:3.

10. Bagley, *Sackler Collections*, pp. 521–31.

11. *Gui* with snake foot-band and *taotie* belly illustrated in Karlgren, "New Studies," no. 295, pl. XI; *gui* with B8/B9 belly, ibid., no. 381, pl. XL; *gui* with B2 foot-band, ibid., no. 367.

12. *Liding* with cicada as alternate illustrated in Bagley, *Sackler Collections*, p. 97, fig. 110 in the Museum für Ostasiastische Kunst, Köln; *you* with cicada on otherwise A-style vessel in Sumitomo Collection, Kyoto, Hamada Kosaku and Umehara Sueji, illustrated in revised ed. *Sen'oku Seishō*, Kyoto, 1934, pl. XXI; *zun* with cicada in Hayashi Minao, *In Shū jidai seidōki no kenkyū*, Tokyo, 1984, plate vol., p. 137, no. 10.

13. Other tiger-mask-like small *taotie* on *ding* include one from Anyang reported in Xu Qingde, *Kaogu*, 1986, no. 12, p. 1069, fig. 5:2, pl. I:1; and an example in the Low-Beer collection illustrated in Karlgren, "Marginalia," pl. 54a and 18a (both on *ting*).

14. Angular snake on stone *gui* "from Anyang" illustrated in Umehara Sueji, *Kan'an Anyō ibutsu no kenkyū*, Kyoto, 1941, pl. 63; a bronze *gui* formerly in the van Heusden collection is in Willem van Heusden, *Ancient Chinese Bronzes of the Shang and Chou Dynasties*, Tokyo, 1952, pl. XXI.

15. Small bird on *ding* illustrated in Karlgren, "Marginalia," pl. 17b (Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm); also shown in his "New Studies," pl. V, no. 92. Small bird on "*kia*" (*jia*) in ibid., no. 1204 (Nelson-Atkins Museum).

16. Karlgren, "New Studies," no. 550, pl. XLV; Bagley, *Sackler Collections*, p. 403, fig. 71.4; Umehara, *Shina kodō seika*, Japanese Collections, Osaka, 1959–64, pl. 65.

17. The Fu Hao find is reported in Zheng Zhenxiang and Chen Zhida, *Kaogu xuebao*, 1977, no. 2, pl. VI:2 and p. 68; and presented more fully in *Yinxu Fu Hao mu*, Beijing, 1980, pl. XXXII. Both reproductions are substandard; for a good print see the province's omnibus *Henan chutu Shang Zhou qingtongqi*, Vol.

1, Beijing, 1980, pl. 150, which reappears in Bagley, *Sackler Collections*, fig. 123.

18. The find report is in Tang Jinyu, Wang Shouzhi, and Guo Changjiang, *Kaogu*, 1980, no. 3, pp. 211–18, fig. 2:1 and pl. II:1. Three excellent plates, one in color, appear in the province's *Shaanxi chutu Shang Zhou qingtongqi*, Vol. 1, Beijing, 1979, color pl. 7 and pls. 114, 115; and the vessel reappears in Bagley, *Sackler Collections*, fig. 124. Because of the relatively early date, middle Late Shang, the report's authors suggest that the site lay in the border territory controlled by Qiang, Tangut tribesmen, and so not yet part of the Zhou domain.

19. The Metropolitan Museum *lei*, well known in the thirties as a stellar attraction of the Owen Roberts Collection, was published by Umehara in *Ōbei shūcho Shina kodō seika*, Vol. 1, Kyoto, 1933, pl. 45.

20. Illustrated in Bagley, *Sackler Collections*, p. 543, fig. 104.7; the find report is in Zheng Zhenxiang, *Kaogu xuebao*, 1981, no. 4, pp. 491–518, pl. XI:3.

21. Briefly cited in Soper, *Artibus Asiae*, XXVIII, 1966, no. 1, fig. 10.3, from report in *Zhengzhou Erligang*, Beijing, 1959, pl. XIII, fig. 31. Reproduced in Bagley, *Sackler Collections*, p. 131, fig. 199.

22. Reproduced in Bagley, "P'an-lung-ch'eng: A Shang City in Hupei," *Artibus Asiae*, XXXIX, 1977, nos. 3/4, pp. 165–219, fig. 24, Bagley's article was based on the find reports in *Wenwu*, 1976, no. 2: Hubei Provincial Museum, "Panlongcheng Shangdai Erligang qi di qingtongqi," pp. 26–41; and Jiang Hong, "Panlongcheng yu Shangchao di nantu," pp. 42–46.

23. Bagley's *Sackler Collections*, p. 546, figs. 104.14 and 104.15 illustrate two unusually clear examples of *pou* (called *lei*), the second being in the Shanghai Museum and illustrated in their catalogue, *Shanghai bowuguan cang qingtongqi*, 1964, Shanghai, no. 12. The *pou* shown on p. 274, fig. 43.6 of the catalogue, in the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, is basically similar to the two just noted above, except that its belly is covered by a forceful, rigidly laid out "bodied t'ao-t'ieh."

24. A round *lei* in the Metropolitan Museum has three C13 on each side, spaced between the handles: reproduced in Max Loehr, *Ritual Vessels of Bronze Age China*, Asia Society, New York, 1968, no. 42, p. 100.

25. Noted in Bagley's discussion of the Sackler bell, no. 104; *Sackler Collections*, pp. 541–50.

26. Ludwig Bachhofer, "The Evolution of Shang and Early Zhou Bronzes," *Art Bulletin*, 1941, no. 4, p. 107. He also spoke of it as a style of "noble austerity."

27. The two are noted and described in the report on the finds made in the Anyang Western Cemetery between 1969 and 1977, in Yang Baocheng and Yang Xizhang, *Kaogu xuebao*, 1979, no. 1, pp. 27–146. Tomb M93 is described on pp. 54–55 with two outline plans. Dimensions of the tomb at the floor level are 5.4 m by 4.1 m and 3.6 m high. Page 87 and fig. 63.6 deal with the two *zun*; figs. 58.20 and 58.21 show the inscriptions; pl. XIV:2 offers an indistinct photograph. The report concludes with a chart of all the finds made at the site, totaling 939 graves and their contents. Tomb M93 is noted on p. 142, as being located in zone VII (see site map, p. 34) and belonging to the cemetery's last period, IV. Somewhat better photographs of the *zun* are pls. 201 and 202 in *Henan chutu Shang Zhou qingtongqi*.

28. Tomb M907 is in *Kaogu xuebao*, 1979, no. 1, p. 35 (site map), p. 142 (chart), pls. X, XI, XII, XIV (views of vessels), fig. 58.12–17, 19 (inscriptions). The *ya* inscription is 58.15.

An excavated "severe" *zun* from Luoyang, and so presumably Western Zhou, is reported in Fu Yongkui, *Kaogu*, 1959, no. 4, pp. 187–88 and pl. IV:5. Karlgren illustrates one in "Yin and Chou in Chinese Bronzes," *Bulletin*, no. 8, 1936, pl. XVII (A269), then in the Oeder Collection.

29. Umehara, *Nihon shuchō Shina kodō seika*, II, Osaka, 1960, pl. 137.

30. Bagley, *Sackler Collections*, p. 286, fig. 47.1, in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Köln.

31. Ibid., p. 287, fig. 47.2.

32. Ibid., pp. 284–85, no. 47; the design is completed by heavy *taotie* in the middle and foot zones, and a *taotie*-headed cicada upside down inside the "blade," with three different horn types.

33. Supra n. 2. The excavated elephant, found in Hunan, is illustrated in the Metropolitan Museum's *The Great Bronze Age of China*, New York, 1980, no. 24, pl. 83.

34. The "Cutting *gui*," no. 52.174, is analyzed by David Milgrome, "A Bronze *Kuei* in the Newark Museum, Newark, N.J." in *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America*, XVIII, 1964, pp. 64–68, fig. 1.

35. Illustrated in ibid., fig. 2 and n. 37; an inscription names the *gui*'s donor as active under Cheng Wang and Kang Wang, the second and third kings after the conquest.

36. Published with analysis of the inscription by Guo Moruo in *Kaogu xuebao*, 1957, no. 2, pp. 1–5.

37. *In Shū jidai seidōki no kenkyū*, Tokyo, 1984 (2 vols., text and plates) and *In Shū jidai seidōki mon'yō no kenkyū*, Tokyo, 1986.

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